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# IRS Updates Phone Scams Warning

IRS Special Edition Tax Tip 2014-17, August 15, 2014

The IRS is again warning the public about phone scams that continue to claim victims all across the country. In these scams, thieves make unsolicited phone calls to their intended victims. Callers fraudulently claim to be from the IRS and demand immediate payment of taxes by a prepaid debit card or wire transfer. The callers are often hostile and abusive.

The Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration has received 90,000 complaints about these scams. TIGTA estimates that thieves have stolen an estimated \$5 million from about 1,100 victims. To avoid becoming a victim of these scams, you should know:

- The IRS will first contact you by mail if you owe taxes, not by phone.
- The IRS never asks for credit, debit or prepaid card information over the phone.
- The IRS never insists that you use a specific payment method to pay your tax.
- The IRS never requests immediate payment over the telephone.
- The IRS will always treat you professionally and courteously.

Scammers may tell would-be victims that they owe money and that they must pay what they owe immediately. They may also tell them that they are entitled to a large refund. Other characteristics of these scams include:

- Scammers use fake names and IRS badge numbers to identify themselves.
- Scammers may know the last four digits of your Social Security number.
- Scammers spoof caller ID to make the phone number appear as if the IRS is calling.
- Scammers may send bogus IRS emails to victims to support their bogus calls.
- Victims hear background noise of other calls to mimic a call site.
- After threatening victims with jail time or driver's license revocation, scammers hang up. Others soon call back pretending to be from the local police or DMV, and caller ID again supports their claim.

If you get a phone call from someone claiming to be from the IRS, here's what you should do:

- If you know you owe taxes or you think you might owe taxes, call the IRS at 800-829-1040. IRS employees can help you with a payment issue if you owe taxes.
- If you know you don't owe taxes or don't think that you owe any taxes, then call and report the incident to TIGTA at 800-366-4484.
- If scammers have tried this scam on you, you should also contact the Federal Trade Commission and use their "[FTC Complaint Assistant](#)" at [FTC.gov](#). Please add "IRS Telephone Scam" to the comments of your complaint.

The IRS encourages you to be vigilant against phone and [email scams](#) that use the IRS as a lure. Visit the genuine IRS website, [IRS.gov](#), to learn how to [report tax fraud](#) and for more information on what you can do to avoid becoming a victim.

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